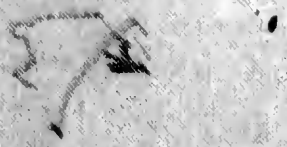
ROWENA'S HAPPY SUMMER



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ROWENA'S HAPPY SUMMER

ROWENA'S HAPPY SUMMER

BY
CELIA MYROVER ROBINSON

With pictures by
HOPE DUNLAP

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TO MY MOTHER

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ROWENA'S HAPPY SUMMER

CHAPTER I

AN APRIL SHOWER

THE great drawing room was very gloomy. The rain was falling steadily without, and there was a little wind blowing, that brought with it the chill of winter, though it was the last day of April. Some of the chill seemed to have penetrated the dingy damask curtains and cast its blight on the little group within.

Betty, curled up in the window-seat with her book, trying to catch the fading light, was the only one in the room who seemed

comfortable. But then, as Aunt Dilsey said, "Miss Betty, she dat roun' an' rosy, she cain' look discomfor'able."

Sallie was strumming in a desultory way on the old cracked piano, and Rowena was wandering restlessly about the room—"havin' the fidgets," to quote Aunt Dilsey again.

"Do stop that, Sallie," she cried at last, crossly, "it 's bad enough to be shut up in the house, and have everything so disagreeable, but *please* don't beat on that tin pan."

"Poor old Knabe," said Sallie good-naturedly, letting down the cover. And then, with a reproving air: "If you would find something to do you would n't feel so restless."

"Do! There is plenty to do—plenty of humdrum things, that I do all the time, and that I 'm tired of doing. I want something pleasant. Oh, Sallie, how can you just go on

doing the same thing, day after day, and never seem to mind it?"

"But I don't mind it. I—I think we have a great deal to be thankful for."

"Oh, don't quote Aunt Annie; that is what she always says: 'My dear, you have much for which to be thankful.' As if I did n't know that we have bread and meat, and a roof over our heads, and clothes to cover us,—though they are n't always in the prevailing fashion, even you and Aunt Annie must admit. I don't want just things that I need,—I want things that I want."

"What do you want particularly—most of all?" demanded Betty from her corner.

Rowena laughed.

"Will you give it to me, if I tell you?"

"I would if I could," said practical Betty, "but I can't, you know."

"I 'll tell you what she wants," said Sallie.

"She wants to be rich, as Aunt Dilsey says we were 'befo' de wah'; and she wants to have beautiful clothes and parties, and live in a little gold house with a little gold fence around it."

"Or in a big castle," broke in Betty the Bookworm, "and be an enchanted princess imprisoned there in the tower, and have a knight come riding by and rescue her, and then marry him, as they always do."

"No; I'll tell you what I want. I don't want to be rich, and I certainly don't want to be imprisoned, not even for the reward of marrying a knight. But, oh, I don't want to be so poor! I want to have enough not to have to scrimp and pinch and wear old clothes, and I want to have good times like other girls, now and then, and for father not to be worried all the time; and to repair the old place, and live as we did before the war."

"We did n't live before the war," said practical Betty.

"Oh, you know what I mean—as the Beauchamps lived. And to hold up my head and not let people like that little upstarty Lizzie Lippin make me feel small, when she sails by me in her silks and laces and says, 'How-de-doo?' " And I am sorry to say that Rowena minced across the room and bowed loftily, setting Betty and Sallie off into peals of laughter.

"Well, she does n't make me feel small," said Sallie, stoutly, "and I 'm sure you hold your head high enough, Weeny. Aunt Dilsey says you 're 'monst'ous high-headed.' "

"Well, I don't always feel as high-headed as I look," said Rowena.

"There 's father!" cried Betty, suddenly. The door was thrown open, and a tall man came in and was almost carried off his feet

by the onslaught of his three undignified daughters.

"Dear, dear!" he said at last, when they had pulled him down into a chair and Rowena and Sallie were seated, one on each wide chair-arm, and Betty on his knee, "what energetic affection! You 've quite taken my breath away!" And he pinched Betty's rosy cheeks and smiled on them all. Such a tender smile father had, that made his pale face beautiful.

"We 've been wishing you 'd come, daddy," said Rowena.

"And Weeny 's been—" began Betty. But a peremptory hand was put over Betty's too garrulous lips, and Rowena said, cheerily: "Daddy, shall I ring for Dilsey to have supper?"

"Supper and lights," said Mr. Beauchamp. "And it is so cool for April, I think Jubal

might make a little pine-knot fire—don't you think so? And after supper you must tell me all you have been doing through the week, and I will relate my adventures."

"Oh, daddy! Do!" said Betty. "You always have such nice, funny times!"

"Dear old daddy!" said Rowena softly, stooping, with a great tenderness on her face, to kiss the little bald spot on the top of his head.

Aunt Dilsey opened the door just then, and behind her came old Jubal, bearing a huge tray.

"I think you gwine lak' yo' suppah bettah in heah, Mawse Gawge. An' Jubal, he'll kennle a fiah in a jiffy, an' you won' haf to stir yo' foot. I know you 's plum beat out."

"I wonder," said Mr. Beauchamp, sniffing, "if that can be hot waffles that I smell? Now, Aunt Dilsey, how did you know I was waffle

hungry? And fried chicken, and done to a turn!"

"La! Mawse Gawge, I done know dey ain' goin' give you nuttin' fitten to eat down thar in Raleigh, so I jes made up my min' I 'd fix you up one good suppah!"

"Good Aunt Dilsey," said Rowena, patting the fat old yellow cheeks, "you are a gold mine in yourself."

"La, run long, chil', with yo' foolishness!" But the flattery pleased her.

Aunt Dilsey was big and fat and yellow, and on her ample bosom many Beauchamps had been cradled. She and Uncle Jubal had belonged to the Beauchamps during slavery days, and when emancipation had come they had stayed on, faithful to Mawse Gawge, as they would be till death. She had been maid to Mawse Gawge's sweetheart, and she had married Mawse Gawge's coachman soon after

her mistress had married Mr. Beauchamp. She had been with them in the days of their prosperity, and had gone through adversity with them.

She it was who had nursed each one of the little girl babies and had cared for the mother in her long, last illness, and had closed the loved eyes when death came.

The girls loved her devotedly, and she alternately domineered over them and spoiled them, but served them faithfully, and would have given every drop of blood in her veins for them.

CHAPTER II

WHO 'S WHO IN BEAUCHAMPVILLE

AFTER supper, when the tray had been taken out by Aunt Dilsey, father and daughters gathered about the "lightwood" fire in the great old fireplace with its shining brass andirons, Dilsey's pride, to have what the girls called "a meeting."

Mr. Beauchamp was in the city all the week, and it was only on Saturday nights that he came home. And how happy were the girls on these nights, and the joyful Sundays that followed, when they would all go together to the old ivy-covered church to worship, and afterwards father and girls would be taken possession of and carried off by some one of the many cousins or aunts. Sometimes it was

Madam Beauchamp, the oldest of the line and father's own aunt, who would claim them and take them all home in her great carriage, behind the pair of beautiful bays. How the girls enjoyed this! Especially Rowena, who was a luxury-loving little body. But most of all they enjoyed the Sundays spent with Aunt Annie and Cousin Marcia. As the girls sometimes wickedly said, "Aunt Annie was good, but depressing." But Cousin Marcia was as sunshiny as any one could desire, and the delight of their hearts. To her they carried all their joys and sorrows, and in her always found ready sympathy—mirth when they were mirthful, and good advice and help for the girlish trials,—trials, many of them imaginary, but some of them very real indeed.

Cousin Marcia was not so much older than the girls themselves. She enjoyed their society as much as they did hers, and knew

that the tribulations and pleasures of girlhood are as real as any that come later in life. She was tall and pretty, with the loveliest color and soft brown hair, the merriest eyes and laugh, and a tongue that Aunt Dilsey said "ran like a bell clapper." She always had the funniest things to tell, and her ready wit was ever at the girls' service and helped them over many a rough place.

More than half of the people of the little North Carolina village were Beauchamps, or branches of that family. They had been wealthy landowners at one time, but now they were most of them poor in worldly goods, which, after all, is not the worst kind of poverty, as Cousin Marcia often reminded the girls. It was necessary to remind Rowena of this very, very often, for poor Rowena hated the necessary makeshifts, the made-over clothes, and the sacrifices and self-denial that

were often required of them. But most of all the hardships that made it necessary for father to be away from them so much and that brought the little trouble wrinkles in his face. And Rowena had loved her mother with a warm, adoring affection. There had never been a day, during the five years since she had left them, that the girl had not longed for her counsel and advice.

Rowena was the eldest and, she often said of herself, the worst of the trio. But though it must be admitted that she had a fiery temper, a quick tongue, and a disposition to rebel against restraint, the warmest, most generous little heart beat under her faded frocks, and she wanted to be good—which is half the battle.

Mr. Beauchamp had found it best to leave the little town and spend his working hours in Raleigh. It was hard for him and for the

girls, but Beauchampville was a dull little burg, and the home and the girls must be cared for, and he could make more money in the city. So every Monday morning he went away, with many injunctions to Jubal and Dilsey and the girls. The girls always walked with him to the station, and it was a sober little trio that waved good-by as the train pulled out, though they tried to be brave.

Aunt Dilsey was a wonderful manager. Jubal was old and almost helpless with rheumatism, but he pottered about the place and worked a little plot in the big vegetable garden, and did his best in the flower garden. But the weeds were more vigorous than he, so the weeds and the flowers had their own sweet will, and grew much as they listed. Yet the old garden was beautiful, and the flowers seemed to grow as the birds sang, as generously and as freely. The house was almost hidden

by the mass of japonicas that lifted their pink heads up to the little iron balcony of the second story, and there were dahlias and hollyhocks and violets and roses—oh, such quantities of roses, yellow and red and pink and white.

One of Rowena's trials was being managed by the aunts. There were so many of them, and each felt it to be her duty to look after the girls' manners and morals while father was away. Indeed, Aunt Annie tried to manage not only the girls but Dilsey and Jubal, and even father, sometimes. Father seemed very grateful for what he called "Sister Annie's kind interest," but the girls revolted, now and then, at Aunt Annie's strict ideas of what was proper for a feminine Beauchamp, and old Jubal grumbled, while Dilsey defied her, declaring she "knowed whut was bes' for Mawse Gawge's chilluns." And in spite of

Mr. Beauchamp's remonstrances, the old negress insisted upon regarding kindly, if inflexible, Aunt Annie as an enemy to the happiness of her charges, and contended with her every step of the way.

Aunt Dilsey had been in the family service so long that she was always treated more as a friend than as a servant, and her heartstrings were wrapped about the girls. So it was difficult for her to bow to any authority outside of Mawse Gawge's little home circle.

It must be confessed that Aunt Annie was not tactful in her ways, and her ideas of decorum were too rigid for healthy girls. And no one could deny that Aunt Dilsey herself was a good disciplinarian and, both by precept and example, taught the girls wisely and faithfully.

No day passed but Cousin Marcia found her way to the little household to advise and help

and comfort. No one minded taking Cousin Marcia's advice, it was always so wise, and was given so sweetly. Every morning for several hours she helped the girls with their lessons, and twice a week Rowena went to her for a music lesson, for music was Rowena's grand passion, and one of her great grievances was the tunelessness of the old piano.

When our story opens Rowena was in her seventeenth year, tall, almost, as Cousin Marcia herself,—all the Beauchamps were tall. Sallie was a quiet girl of thirteen, with gentle, old-timey ways, the little mother of the family, with a love of all womanly occupations, and Aunt Annie's favorite. Betty was a round, happy little person of ten.

And now that I have introduced you to the family, I will go on with my story.

CHAPTER III

THE SATURDAY NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT

THE Saturday Night's Entertainments, as Rowena called them, were one of the girls' great pleasures, and Dilsey would have to come to the door several times, to remonstrate, before the little group broke up.

"Now, father," Betty said, as she snuggled close to him, "tell us!" To Betty, father was a bearded Scheherazade.

And so father told them of the funny old Irish peanut woman and her son Pat, who kept a peanut stand on the corner near his place of business, and of the old Italian and his pretty daughter, who kept a fruit shop just next to the peanut stand, where father sometimes stopped to buy fruit for the girls on

Saturday nights, and to talk to the green and yellow parrot.

Then there was the pretty young girl who lived just across from his boarding house. The girls knew her quite well, and Rowena thought she was the best of all. I do not mean that the girls really knew her, but father had told them so much about her that they felt as if they did.

She lived in a big, old-fashioned, red-brick house, almost covered with English ivy, and the yard was full of beautiful roses. One morning father had stopped a moment at the fence to admire some of the beautiful Jacqueminots, not knowing any one was in the garden, and Miss Fairfax had suddenly appeared, bobbing up like a daffy-down-dilly, father said, from one of the beds, and had wished him a blithe good morning, and had filled his hands with roses.

That was more than a year ago, and now she was a young lady, going to real grown-up parties. She and daddy were great friends, for he had to pass the house every day and she was often in the garden to wish him good morning, and many roses found their way from her garden to his office desk, to make the days brighter. One day he had told her about his girls, and after that she often asked for them, and sometimes sent them flowers on the Saturday nights.

"I did not like to tell her it was sending coals to Newcastle," father said, on the first night he had brought them.

"And it is n't," said Rowena. "Who could have too many roses? And these are so beautiful!"

So this friendship had sprung up between these girls. One day, in talking to her, father found that he had attended the university with

her father, and so, one day, Mr. Fairfax was in the garden when father passed, and the two renewed their old acquaintanceship, and father would now and then spend his evenings at the Fairfax home, with Dolly's father and mother.

This evening he had a great deal to tell of a party Dolly had had—a real grown-up party. He even told about the pretty white dress with its long train, and the roses she carried. "Father tells every little bit, and that's why his stories are so nice," Betty said.

"And now tell me your adventures," father said, when he had told over and over about the party.

"We have n't had any adventures, father, not even a little one," Rowena said.

"What have you been doing, then? What have you learned?"

"I 've learned to make bread, father," said Sallie.

"Why, that is something worth while," said father. "I shall expect to have some rolls the next time I come."

"You shall, daddy, but I wish you would tell Dilsey to let me go into the kitchen whenever I like. She says I get under her feet,—as though I were a cat! And then Aunt Annie fusses with me, too, and says I am getting my hands rough. But I *do* love to cook. Please make Aunt Dilsey let me, father!"

"I 'll see, my little cookee!" father said, patting the flaxen head.

"And now what has Betty learned?"

"I 'm in fractions," Betty said, with a radiant face, "which is very good indeed for a little girl of ten, Cousin Marcia says."

"Let 's see if you can give me three and three-thirds of a kiss," said father.

"Why, that 's four!" said Betty, clapping her hands. And she gave them with good will.

"And you, Weeny?" asked father, putting his hand under her chin and turning her face so that he could look into the clear gray eyes. "What have you learned?"

"Oh, father, I don't believe I've learned anything. I'm a stupid failure, I'm afraid. But I've been trying to remember about my temper. I'm afraid I haven't succeeded very well, though."

"Father, she has," declared Sallie. "She hasn't talked back to Aunt Annie once."

"But I've wanted to," said Rowena.

"If you can conquer the doing of it, perhaps after a while the wishing to will be conquered, too."

"Father," said Rowena, suddenly, "the Green Cottage is rented."

"Are you sure, my dear?" Father had straightened up in his chair and looked interested.

"Yes, sir. It is all opened, and I 've seen them—there is a lady and a girl. Oh, father, such a pretty girl, and she is lame. I have only seen the lady once. She was dressed in black. The girl goes driving every day in a little pony cart. She is so pretty, but she seems so lame, and she looks so frail. She drives, herself, but she always has a footman behind."

"And you 've been wishing you had a pony cart and a footman, eh?" said father, pinching her cheeks.

"Yes, I would love to have one, father, of course. But I'd rather be poor, and be able to walk and run, than to be rich as she is, and so lame. Oh, father, it is so pitiful!"

"What are the newcomers named?" asked father.

"I don't know—no one seems to know who they are or where they come from, Dilsey says."

" 'Speak of the angels, we hear the rustling of their wings,' " quoted father, as Dilsey poked her head in the door.

"La, Mawse Gawge! It done mos' eleben o'clock, an' it 's time dem chilluns wuz in baid."

And so the good nights were said and the girls trooped off to bed, leaving father to dream,—awake before the fire,—for a while. Only Rowena lingered a little, after the others, to ask:

"Father, who was Madeline Beauchamp?"

Father did not answer at once. Then he said: "Why do you ask, little daughter?"

"Because—just because. Who was she, father?"

"I can't tell you, now, dear. Some other time, maybe. And, Rowena, how many times must I tell you not to listen to servants' stories? Kiss me good night, and don't

puzzle your head over what you can't understand." And then, as he looked at the wistful face. "I'll tell you, some day, daughter."

And so Rowena kissed him good night, and followed the other girls to bed.

CHAPTER IV

A ROMANCE OF THE CIVIL WAR

IT was the next evening that father, when he had kissed Betty and Sallie good night, drew Rowena to him, as he dismissed the other girls with his bright, cheery nod. Father was always cheerful, no matter how deep the little worry wrinkles furrowed his brow.

"I want to speak with you, little daughter," he said, as he kissed her.

"I have been thinking about what you told me last night, and I have decided to tell you the story of poor Madeline Beauchamp. Who told you anything, Rowena, of the story?"

"I heard Dilsey and Jubal talking, and Jubal said that he heard Madam Beauchamp's Dan say that the Green Cottage had been

rented to foreigners, and that some people said the lady was Madam Beauchamp's granddaughter. And then they began to talk about 'Miss Madeline.' But, father, it is n't the first time I have heard them speak of her," said the girl, honestly.

"My dear," her father said, laying his hand gently on the rumpled brown head, "there is no reason why you should not know the story, now that you are old enough to understand. Only, father would rather tell you himself. You must not listen to servants' tales. Jubal and Dilsey do not understand, and they get things wrong.

"Madeline Beauchamp was Madam Beauchamp's only daughter. She was a beautiful, high-spirited girl, restive of all restraint—you remind me of her very much sometimes, Rowena."

"Me! Oh, father!"

Rowena's romantic young soul was fired at the thought.

"She was self-willed, just as you are, and it brought her great sorrow in the end, though I could never blame her. She was seventeen when the Civil War opened, and at its close she ran away from home with an army officer—a Federal captain, who was wounded in a skirmish near her home and was nursed by the servants, old Mammy Lucia and the maids, to convalescence. Madam Beauchamp gave him of her hospitality in so far as the best of care was concerned, for old Mammy Lucia was a capital nurse, but she never entered the room where he lay ill, and forbade her daughter to do so. She sent formally to inquire of him each day, and gave freely of her little store of worldly goods, that he might have everything necessary during his illness, denying herself many necessities that she might

do this. But she would not look upon his face.

"She was hard, perhaps, Rowena, but she had just lost her two sons on the battlefield, and her husband was then lying at death's door in a hospital. But Madeline's warm young heart went out to the helpless man lying there day after day, with only the kind offices of the servants to depend on, and now and then she would slip out, when she would see the doctor leaving his room, to ask about him. And often she would make dainty dishes for him, soups and jellies, with her own hands.

"She was young and ardent and pitiful, and one day old Lucia came to them, Madeline and her mother, where they sat in the morning room, sewing for the soldiers, and told them that she believed he was dying.

" 'Oh, Madam, come to him!' she begged, 'for I am afraid it is the end.' But the older

woman rose and rang the bell, and sent Old Dan, a young lad then, on a horse for the doctor, and sat down again to her sewing. The girl stood up then, slim and tall and white faced.

" 'Are n't you going to him—a dying man —yourself?' Madam looked at her proudly and shook her head, and continued at her work. Then the girl left the room without a word, and went with Mammy Lucia down the hall and up the wide stairway, until they came to his room, and she went in and laid her cool young hand on his hot brow, and she did not leave him again, night or day, until the doctors pronounced him out of danger.

"Those were sad days, my darling, all over the country, and Madam's heart was near to breaking, or she could not have been so hard. She never spoke to Madeline again, and when he came back for her after the war, and she

went away with him, her mother disinherited her. They went abroad, and she wrote to her mother many times, but Madam never forgave her. Her own daughter, also Madeline, married an artist—a famous Frenchman, a very distinguished man—and they have one child, a little lame girl, named also Madeline, and, so I am told, the image of the pretty Madeline of the war-time romance.

"I heard to-day that it is they who have rented the Green Cottage for the summer."

"Oh, father, is n't it romantic!"

Rowena's eyes were glowing.

"It is very sad, my dear; I am glad there are no more wars, or rumors of wars, to disturb the quiet of our country."

And then he kissed her and sent her away to bed. But not to sleep.

Rowena lay for hours thinking of that other girl, Madeline, and her sorrow. She knew

that Madam Beauchamp's husband, General Beauchamp, had died in the hospital. She had seen pictures of him when she had gone to the great house with father to call upon Madam—a little old lady, still straight and vigorous despite her eighty years. The great general looked very kindly in his dashing uniform, seated upon his white charger, and Rowena felt sure that his heart had been as gentle as his face. The only thing that looked warlike about him was his uniform and his attitude. She wished that he had lived to forgive his daughter, and she sobbed a little, all alone there in the dark, at the thought of the sad young wife, waiting year after year for her mother's forgiveness. For Rowena felt sure that she had waited and longed and prayed for it.

And so it was that a most romantic and very pure flame of interest sprang up in the girl's

heart for the little lame cousin—the granddaughter of pretty Madeline.

Rowena was given somewhat to romantic fancies. Perhaps her own lonely childhood had much to do with this. Even the most devoted of Aunt Dilseys and numberless kind-meaning aunts and cousins cannot take the place of one's own mother, and often Rowena longed for the gentle voice and tender touch.

Maybe it would not have been quite so hard if they had not been poor; for they were very poor indeed. Father's father, too, had fallen on the battlefield, and all his fortune had been swept away. There were four sisters and a mother to care for, and father, who was wonderfully clever and brave, had had a hard time making both ends meet. At last he had sold the old plantation, after his mother's death, and, his sisters having married, they had all moved to the village, and later father

had gone to Raleigh. He was burdened by many debts, brought about through illness and the failure of crops on the plantation, and Rowena so longed, with her ardent, warm young heart, to help him.

CHAPTER V

IN QUEST OF AN ACQUAINTANCE

SALLIE was sitting on the back steps, paring apples, and Betty was curled up in the crook of an old maple tree, munching one of the half-green apples pilfered from the dish, and reading *Infelice*. Rowena stepped out through the low French window upon the piazza, swinging her best hat in her hand. It was n't a very handsome best; she had worn it two summers. Dilsey had cleaned it twice with sulphur and lemon, and Cousin Marcia had trimmed it over for her, with her deft fingers.

Rowena had on a fresh white dress, and her hair, usually somewhat towsled, was carefully brushed and braided.

"Rowena stepped out . . . upon the piazza, swinging her best hat"
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Sallie looked up from her apples in surprise and Betty threw a core with precision, hitting Rowena squarely on her somewhat tip-tilted nose. To Betty's surprise she did not storm at all. Sallie and Betty always termed Rowena's small rages "storms." She picked up the core and threw it back again, but it went wide of its mark.

"Want one?" called Betty, good-naturedly, and tossed her an apple.

Rowena went out of the garden and down the road, munching the apple, and made no reply to the girls when they called after her to know where she was going.

"She 's wearing her best white muslin," said Sallie, with some wonder. "She washed it herself and started to iron it, but Aunt Dilsey would n't let her, and ironed it herself. I wonder where she is going."

"She had her best hat," said Betty, "the one

Cousin Marcia trimmed. And did you notice how she had her hair fixed? Rowena never cares whether her hair is tidy or not, after she once fixes it in the morning."

"She has lovely hair," said Sallie. "I wish mine was brown and crinkley like hers." And she threw her own straight braids back, with some disdain.

"Well, her temper is crinkley, too, like her hair," said Betty. "And I like yours best."

"What? My temper, or my hair?"

"Both."

"Well, I don't know; Rowena is a dear when she wants to be, if she is quick."

"Of course she is a dear. Who said she was n't? Nobody minds Weeny's tempers. Nobody but Aunt Annie, and she minds everything. I do wonder where she is going?"

Rowena went on slowly down the road.

She did not know very surely herself where she was going. Her vague plans were only half formed. She had risen very early that morning, and had washed the white dress very carefully and Dilsey had ironed it for her.

Her father's story had made a great impression on the young mind and heart, and her thoughts were full of poor young Madeline as she turned her footsteps in the direction of the Green Cottage. She had seen the black-garbed mother and the lame girl driving the day before down this very road, a little crooked road, right in the heart of the pines, and she hoped that maybe she might chance to meet them again—the daughter of Madeline and Madeline's little granddaughter.

Madeline's granddaughter! How strange it seemed to think of the bright, beautiful girl as an old woman with a grandchild—a third little Madeline!

She did not meet any one, and when she passed the Green Cottage there was no one in the yard and no pony cart drawn up before the gate, as she had hoped there might be. But the window was open, and she could see the flutter of white curtains in the breeze, and the little place looked bright and homelike.

She walked into the country and found a few late "mountain roses" under the thick wire grass. It was late when she passed the Green Cottage again, and she was hurrying, for she knew that Dilsey would scold if she was late to dinner. A lady stood at the gate, looking anxiously down the road, and when Rowena lifted her sweet, ardent young face she answered the girl's friendly look with a quiet greeting.

"My dear!" she called, after Rowena had passed, and the girl paused and came back, quickly.

"Are you from the village? Could you tell me of any cottage or farmhouse about here where I could get fresh, new-laid eggs each day? My servants are foreign, and I do not know the country, and it is necessary that my little girl have new-laid eggs and milk above suspicion."

Rowena eagerly gave her the names and addresses of those who might serve her. As she turned away she saw the woman's face clear, and a relieved exclamation broke from her as the pony cart turned a bend of the road and the lame girl drove up to the gate, with the footman behind.

She laid her hand on Rowena's shoulder.

"I want you to meet my little girl," she said. And then, with a smile, "You are a Beauchamp, are you not?"

Rowena smiled and nodded, speechless with delight.

"I knew. There is a striking strain of resemblance in the family. What is your name, my dear? Madeline, this is your distant cousin, Rowena. You must come to see my little girl sometimes, if you will, and your father consents. You must ask him," she added, gravely.

With a winning smile the lame girl had given her slender white hand to Rowena, and then the footman handed her her crutches and helped her from the cart.

"Good-by, my dear."

The older woman had her arm about the lame girl. "You are tired, darling," she said. And Rowena saw them go up the pathway, the girl walking with the crutch and leaning on her mother's arm.

But at the door of the Green Cottage they turned to wave farewell to her.

CHAPTER VI

A CALL AND A LETTER WITH A CREST

ROWENA walked quickly down the road toward home. Her mind was in a delightful tumult, and she almost ran, when she neared the house, to tell Sallie and Betty of the afternoon's adventures. Every unusual incident was an adventure in Rowena's dull life: dull it seemed to her, for she had not yet learned that riches and happiness do not always go hand in hand, and that the simplest duties of life often bring the greatest joy, if one will look for the bright spots along the way. When she burst in upon them Dilsey was already grumbling at her absence. Sallie and Betty were setting the table, and looked up with delighted interest when she told them

of her meeting with the lame girl and her mother.

"I wonder if father will let you go?" asked Sallie, and Rowena's face fell, for the moment, but brightened again at once.

"I know daddy will let me go. Why should n't he?" And then, with a sweet, generous impulse, as she saw the wistfulness of the two faces turned interestedly toward her: "And she can come here. I hope her mother will let her; then we can all be friends. She is our cousin, and I believe father will say yes."

And father did say yes, even more readily than the girls had anticipated, in spite of Aunt Annie's demurs.

"But, my dear Annie, why should n't the children be friends?" asked father.

"In the first place," said Aunt Annie, "they may be impostors."

Father laughed.

"The little lame girl does not look very much like an impostor," he said. "And she has Madeline Beauchamp's mouth and eyes, if one may judge from old portraits."

"No one has called on her," said Aunt Annie, with some stiffness.

"That 's a pity," said father. "I noticed in church this morning that she looked lonely and sad."

"But she is very pretentious," said Aunt Annie, "with her footman and maids and butlers."

"She does not look pretentious in the least," said father.

And then he closed the conversation by laying his hand on Rowena's brown head and saying:

"You may go to see her as often as you like, my dear, as long as they make you welcome

and it does not interfere with the duties that Cousin Marcia and Dilsey prescribe for you, and as Aunt Annie is going now, you and I may as well walk up the road and pay our first visit."

Rowena flew away to smooth her unruly locks and get her hat, and she and her father walked with Aunt Annie to her gate, and then on up the road to the Green Cottage.

The maid, a pretty, dark-eyed French girl in a black gown and ruffled white apron, opened the door to them. Madame was out, she said, with what Rowena thought a charming accent, but would they not come in and rest for a while? They might be back, madame and mademoiselle, at any moment.

But father said no, and gave her his card, with Rowena's name written under his, which made her feel very grown up, indeed.

And then he and Rowena had walked on out into the country to gather dogwood flowers for the tea table. But not before Rowena had caught a glimpse of the dainty sitting room, with its low couch and the tea table drawn near, set out with a pretty service of blue and white, and, at the end of the room, a grand piano thrown open, with music on the rest, as though some one had left it only a short time before.

Rowena kissed her father very gratefully that night, when she went to bed, and she lay awake for a long time, thinking of lame Madeline and the dainty room and, most of all, the piano.

Music was Rowena's great passion. The old, tuneless Knabe was to her a positive torture, and she practiced always at her Cousin Marcia's, for her harmony-loving soul could not bear the discord of the old instrument, and

during Sallie's practice hours she usually fled from the house and hid herself in Betty's nook up in the old maple tree.

On Monday Cousin Marcia came for the girls and carried them home with her for a sewing bee, for the wardrobes were much in need of repair, now that the summer days were at hand.

It was not until Tuesday that Rowena heard again of Madeline. She was out in the back yard, having just washed her hair, and was walking up and down the path, frowning and thinking of ways and means for the summer toilettes, when Betty came tearing like mad around the house.

"It 's a man, Rowena," she said, breathlessly, "and he can't talk anything but gibberish, just like a monkey. Do come and see."

Rowena, with hair flying, sped through the hall to the front door, to be met by the old

French butler from the Green Cottage, who handed her a note—a note with a coat-of-arms on the creamy note paper, addressed to

MISS ROWENA BEAUCHAMP
The Cedars

Oh, the delight of that moment! Even the undignified figure she was conscious of presenting could not take from her joy.

The old butler said there was an answer, and she tore up the stairs with Betty pounding behind her, to read and answer it. It was from Mrs. Lagare, and was an invitation to tea that evening at six, at the Green Cottage, with polite words of regret at having missed her father and herself on Sunday afternoon.

Betty watched enviously as Rowena rummaged through bureau drawers and portfolio for writing materials, and when the note was

at last answered, in a trembling, girlish scrawl, and, to Rowena's humiliation, on a half sheet of paper, the only possible thing in the portfolio, Betty sped away to find Sallie and impart the news.

Sallie was dismissed post-haste to Cousin Marcia, and together the three, Marcia, Sallie, and Betty, with Aunt Dilsey in the doorway offering suggestions, got Rowena ready for the evening, for to the little girls it was a great event. The best white frock seemed out of the question, as it had been worn twice on Sunday, but under Dilsey's skillful fingers—Dilsey could do wonderful things with raw starch and a hot iron—it became a thing of beauty. She even fluted the skimpy ruffles, until the little darned frock looked very crisp and dainty, and Cousin Marcia loaned Rowena an old cameo pin and her own lace collar.

So it was a very fresh, flushed Rowena who presented herself at last at the Green Cottage, only a few minutes late, despite all the preparations.

CHAPTER VII

TEA AT THE GREEN COTTAGE

MRS. LAGARE herself met Rowena at the door, and she found Madeline on the couch, with the tea table drawn near, by an open window, where a great bush of syringa nodded to them from the garden. There were bowls of roses about the room, which was very dainty and homelike. But the furnishings were very simple, and Madeline's white frock was no finer than the one worn by Rowena herself. Mrs. Lagare wore black, with white bands at her neck and wrists. She was not at all like any of the Beauchamps that Rowena had ever seen, and the girl decided that she must resemble her father, the captain in the Federal army.

Madeline was pale and languid; she reminded Rowena of a sweet, white lily, but her laugh was as ready as Rowena's own, and she was eager to be friends with this new-found cousin. They had traveled a great deal in search of health for the frail girl, for, while Rowena learned that it was only in the last few years the lameness had been pronounced, Madeline had always been a delicate child. She spoke with a slight accent, which Rowena found amusing, and she was as eager about the new life in America as Rowena was about her stories of France and Italy and Switzerland. They had spent some months in New York before they had come to Beauchampville, and the two girls chattered like magpies about the big city, for the great event in Rowena's life had been ten days when Cousin Marcia had taken her to New York City.

There were lovely little brown cakes for tea,

and cream, and delicious fig preserves that the old French cook had put up the summer before in Italy, and there were green peppers stuffed with chicken,—a new dish that Rowena liked very much indeed,—and then something very delicious that tasted like cream and cake and moonshine, Rowena said afterward, a sort of poetized Charlotte russe.

By the time tea was over, the girls had reached a common ground of interest, for they were both musical, and when old Babette had taken away the tea things Mrs. Lagare opened the grand piano and asked Rowena to play.

How glad Rowena was then of the faithful hours of practice under Cousin Marcia. She had never had any other instruction and, as Cousin Marcia often said, she was outdistancing her teacher, for she was a born musician. So when she turned at last and

faced them, after playing several pieces, her face flushed with delight when she saw the pleasure she had given.

"Why, my dear, you play wonderfully," said Mrs. Lagare. "Our little Madeline here cannot hope to compete with you. Who has taught you?"

When Rowena confessed that the only instruction had been very desultory, under kind but busy Cousin Marcia, with no instrument at home to practice on but the cracked Knabe, Mrs. Lagare seemed much astonished.

"Your touch is wonderful," she said, "and your technic is good. You ought to have masters. I hope you will come very often and play for us. When Madeline is stronger you might try some duets."

Rowena went home escorted by the maid with a lantern, treading on air. Sallie and Betty were both asleep, for it was nearly ten,

but Dilsey was waiting, nodding on the piazza, to help her child to bed, and to scold, on general principles, at the unusual bedtime hour. But Dilsey's scolding could not dampen Rowena's ardor, and she laid her head on her pillow, after saying her prayers and asking God to cure Madeline, with happy visions of future days of sunshine and music.

Several days passed before Rowena heard again from the Green Cottage. The time was passed in the round of home duties that occupied a great part of the girl's time, for Dilsey would not permit her children to be idle, and Cousin Marcia watched over them like a kind dove and Aunt Annie like a hen mother. Woe be! if Aunt Annie came upon them unexpectedly and found the sitting room undusted or the bedrooms untidy.

Betty was a great bookworm, but she always did her plodding part faithfully; Sallie was

"On Hallowe'en all the cousins were invited to a party at Valambrosa"

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naturally industrious; but poor Rowena found the homely tasks very irksome, though she tried hard not to shirk, and did her part as best she could, "with her head in the clouds," as Aunt Annie said.

When Sallie had once repeated this criticism of Rowena to father he had drawn the girl to him and kissed her, understandingly. That was the beautiful thing about father: he always understood.

"I hope my little girl will always keep her head in the clouds," he said. "There is nothing wrong in dreaming, if one's dreams are true and noble. And I believe my little girl's dreams are always that. Only, don't forget and tread on the flowers along the way, and stumble over the duties that are waiting to be done."

And Rowena did try to remember, and Cousin Marcia comforted her by praising her,

now and then, for her earnest efforts to do the humdrum tasks of mending and darning and dusting and gardening without grumbling.

CHAPTER VIII

AN EXCHANGE OF TALENTS

NEARLY a week passed before Rowena heard from the Green Cottage again, and then one morning, just after breakfast, the old butler came with a note for her from Mrs. Lagare, and its contents caused Rowena's head to spin with joy. For Mrs. Lagare wrote to ask her to assist Madeline with her music.

"For the last year," she said, "she has practiced very little, but now that she is getting stronger I wish her to resume her music.

"Will you come to us for two hours every day, and practice with her, and talk with her a little? She needs young companionship, and I shall consider it a great favor. Do not reply at once. Think it over; you may not wish to

give us so much of your time. Ask your father, and if he consents I shall look for you again on Monday.

"The question of compensation we will talk over when you come."

"What does she mean, father?" Rowena asked, when she read him the note.

"She wishes to pay you, my dear, for your services."

"Services! Pay me! Oh, father! it will be a pure joy to go there and talk to Madeline and play on that beloved piano. I should not think of accepting any pay."

"But why not, my darling? Mrs. Lagare may not wish to place herself under obligation to you. Three hours out of each day will deserve some compensation."

"Two hours, the note says, father."

"Yes, but it will take some time to walk to the Green Cottage and back—quite a half hour

each way, by the big road. I should not refuse her offer. Father is not able to give his little daughter much spending money, now, until the debts are paid, and going out each day you will need some frocks. Eh, Marcia?" For Cousin Marcia was present at the family conclave.

"Yes, Rowena needs many things, and a small sum will not come amiss. Take the money, child, and be thankful that the good God has given you your talent."

And so when Rowena went timidly on Monday to answer the note in person, it was to consent with bright shy eyes of gratitude.

Mrs. Lagare and Madeline were almost as pleased as she was, and when Mrs. Lagare asked her if she would consider twenty dollars a month compensation enough, she was speechless with pleased astonishment.

"It will take up practically your whole

morning, and your companionship, I am sure, will do Madeline a world of good."

So Rowena walked home with a happy, beating heart, after spending an hour practicing and afterwards lunching with Madeline. What visions of pretty things danced in her head! Betty should have the white frock she needed, and Sallie a new hat, for the old brown one was awfully shabby. She decided she would just stop at the milliner's to look at the hats on display—the new spring styles, just in.

Miss Stires, the village milliner, was greatly surprised when a shadow fell across her work and, looking up, she met Rowena's happy face, and the request to look at the new hats, just advertised in the morning paper as having arrived from New York.

"Hats! What kind?" asked Miss Stires, jabbing her needle into her strawberry emery

and looking somewhat severely at Rowena. "Something for yourself?"

"Yes, and for Sallie and Betty," said Rowena, thinking out loud.

"Good land, child," said Miss Stires, as she led her into the room where the hats were on display, "you goin' to get 'em by the wholesale?"

"No 'm," said Rowena, shortly, and then forgot her displeasure at the sight of a clover-trimmed leghorn.

"Your pa must be doin' right well now," said Miss Stires, as she reached for a brown hat, trimmed with bunches of oats: "Now this is real nice an' wearin'."

"So are you," said Rowena. She did not mean to say it, but somehow the words slipped out before she knew.

Miss Stires put her hands on her bony hips and looked at her severely.

"Rowena Beauchamp, who be you talkin' to? How dare you sass me?"

She looked so funny, with her little head cocked on one side like an offended sparrow, that Rowena laughed, and then, realizing that rudeness was not an excuse for rudeness, said contritely:

"Excuse me, Miss Stires. Truly, I did n't mean it. Let me see that white one with the daisies."

"That 's four dollars," said Miss Stires, not troubling to take it down, "and I know your pa ain 't goin' to give that for a hat, buyin' 'em three at a time."

Rowena went out, angry and amused. She did not go home at once, but cut across lots and ran in to see Cousin Marcia. Aunt Annie was on the piazza, so she did not open her heart until on the way home, when Cousin Marcia walked a part of the way with her.

"Think of it, Cousin Marcia, twenty dollars all my own!" Her tone announced untold wealth.

When she told about the hats Cousin Marcia laughed.

"Don't mind Miss Hattie; she lives all alone so much that she has to take an interest in other's affairs. But I should not be too quick to spend my money, Rowena. It will melt in a hurry. Father warned me not to let you spend it on Betty and Sallie. You need so many things yourself, and you owe it to Mrs. Lagare and Madeline to be neatly dressed. I think it would be nice to get Betty the new frock, and Sallie does need a hat dreadfully; but I should stop there, until you have renovated your own wardrobe a bit. And besides, my dear, a month is a month, you know, and it will be some time, I suspect, before you get your first check. I will come

over to-morrow, and we will see what we can do with what we have on hand. I am going to give you my blue gingham. It has shrunk since it has been washed, and I will make it over for you, if you will have it."

But they had not counted on Mrs. Lagare's sharp brown eyes. She saw the little make-shifts; the faded gingham and the darned white dress did not escape her notice, for all Dilsey's care, and on Saturday morning, when Rowena put on her hat to return home, after a long, happy morning at the piano, trying over new music with Madeline, Mrs. Lagare slipped a five-dollar bill into her hand.

"If you don't mind, I shall pay my debt by the week," she said. "It is more convenient."

"But this is more than twenty dollars a month," said Rowena, doubtfully. Mrs. Lagare only laughed and said:

"And you are more help, and pleasure too,

than I had dared to hope. Look at Madeline! She is as bright as a cricket."

And Madeline certainly did look happy.

Rowena herself was very happy, too, as she went down the long road, with the flowers blooming along the way and the birds singing riotously in the trees. Oh, how good it was to be alive and well! If only Madeline could run and skip and dance along the road, as she was doing. Suppose she were lame! And then Rowena thought of father, and how sorry he would be, and a great wave of gladness filled her that she was well and strong. "Some day," she thought as she turned into the gate and entered the old shabby house, "maybe I shall be able to help drive the worry wrinkles from his face."

CHAPTER IX

A PEACE COMMISSIONER

THE ladies of the family of Beauchamp had, one and all, called on Mrs. Lagare, with the exception of old Madam Beauchamp. Even Aunt Annie, at last, had called on the strange cousins in the little Green Cottage. But, so far, no one had dared to speak to Madam of the lame girl and her mother. Old Dan, in his garrulous way, had told her that the Green Cottage was occupied, but even he had not dared to say by whom, except that they were "fur'ners," and that the little daughter was lame.

It was father who told Madam at last. Father talked it over one Sunday with Marcia and Aunt Annie, with Rowena clinging

to his arm, on the way home from morning service.

"Some one ought to tell her," he said. "Her own daughter's child and grandchild!"

"Why don't you let Mrs. Lagare make herself known to Madam?" said Aunt Annie. "It is not our business. For my part, I cannot understand why she should have come here—unless she thinks Madam has some money."

Father frowned.

"I don't think," he said, "from what I have seen of Mrs. Lagare, that she lacks for either money or delicacy of feeling. And she seems to me to be a woman of remarkably good sense. I suspect she has sufficient reasons for coming, and will make herself known to her grandmother in time, but she does not know Madam as we know her, and I fear the shock of the meeting for both of them."

No one ever knew what passed between Madam and her nephew on that afternoon when he entered her room alone and broke the news to her of the presence of her grandchild and great-grandchild in the village. But father looked troubled when he came out, and Madam shut herself in her room for days, and would see no one but the maid who waited upon her. She was not sick, she said, and she would not have the doctor. And when she came downstairs again she was as straight as ever, and carried herself in a proud silence.

She sent Aunt Annie, however, to Mrs. Lagare, and Mrs. Lagare told father afterwards of her message, when he came one night for Rowena when she had stayed to tea at the Green Cottage.

"She thinks me an impostor," she said gently, "and bade your sister let me know that she was a broken old woman, with few

worldly goods to leave to any one, even if she were so inclined."

Her brown eyes filled.

"I do not need money," she said, simply. "We have enough. But when my mother died I promised her to come and find her mother and give her her dying love and blessing. She yearned so for her, always."

"Perhaps I did wrong," began Mr. Beauchamp.

She interrupted him. "No, I am glad you prepared her. The shock might have been too great otherwise, for she is an old woman. But I do not give up hope." And, unconsciously, she laid her hand on Madeline's bright head.

But if Madam was cold the others were inclined to be kind. Even Aunt Annie thawed under the widow's gentle, unassuming manner. And every one loved Madeline. The village folk learned to watch for the pony cart with its

pretty burden, for the child's physical infirmities had not served to dull the bright mind and joyous nature. Her laugh rang with merriment, and the woods resounded often with the shouts of the four girls, for she made friends with Sallie and Betty, and the four often picnicked together in the woods. The great doctor in New York had ordered Madeline to be kept out of doors a great deal, and in the fall, if she was stronger, she was to go back to the city, when the doctor hoped that maybe, through an operation, the lameness might be cured.

CHAPTER X

A SURPRISE PARTY

WHAT happy summer days they were to Rowena! The girl's beauty-loving nature reveled in the pretty surroundings of Madeline's home, and the craving for music was satisfied as never before. The two girls read together, and Rowena began to study French under Madeline's tutelage, assisted by Mrs. Lagare.

The money paid for the mornings with Madeline bought the pretty clothes that she had longed for, with something besides for Sallie and Betty, and even an occasional book for father and some new music now and then.

As the days grew warmer it became the custom for Pierre to drive Rowena home in

the pony cart, and sometimes Madeline would drive with her, when she was strong enough, to spend the rest of the day in the old garden with the girls. It was a beautiful old garden, and the shabby old house was a delightful place in Madeline's eyes. Old Dilsey loved the delicate child, as did every one, and she told the girls wonderful stories of the old days, when the Beauchamps had owned most of the country thereabout, and, according to Dilsey, lived a life of splendor and attractiveness.

Rowena's birthday was in July, and Madeline begged that she might be allowed to remain for dinner after the morning lessons, promising to drive over with her in the afternoon. Rowena was surprised when shortly after dinner Jubal came over, bearing Cousin Marcia's suitcase, packed with Rowena's prettiest white frock, with blue sash and

ribbons, and her best shoes. Rowena donned the fresh clothes, wondering a little, and Madeline insisted on dressing, too, in honor of the birthday, and the two girls looked very fresh and lovely as they drove off in the direction of The Cedars.

And when they reached The Cedars there were Sallie and Betty in white frocks and fresh ribbons, and a number of other fresh-faced cousins in holiday clothes.

"It 's a party," volunteered Betty, running out to meet them, "a surprise party!"

There was a flower-decked chair for Madeline, and there were little tables set out in the garden, where Dilsey and Cousin Marcia, Dilsey in a highly starched calico and Cousin Marcia in a blue lawn, were busily setting out cakes and fruit. And there was a great freezer of cream that Mrs. Lagare had sent over, with the fruit, in the morning—for it was Mrs.

Lagare who had thought of the party for her favorite.

After all the excitement of greetings and ejaculations of delight Cousin Marcia came in and, laughing, blindfolded the wondering young hostess. Then, with Madeline on her crutch, they all filed slowly into the shabby drawing room, sweet with flowers, and when Cousin Marcia untied the handkerchief and drew it from Rowena's eyes, there in the place of the old cracked Knabe, between the two south windows, was a beautiful little upright piano, a gift, also, from Mrs. Lagare. Rowena gave one startled cry, and then buried her head on Cousin Marcia's shoulder and burst into tears. But the tears did not last long, and soon the smiles had chased the drops away, the room was ringing with music, and every one was dancing.

What a wonderful day it was! And that

night when Rowena said her prayers she felt very thankful to the loving Father who had caused such a beautiful, kind thought to blossom into a beautiful deed in the hearts of those who loved her.

CHAPTER XI

THE BEAUCHAMP SPIRIT

THE summer wore away, and Madeline seemed to grow stronger each day, in spite of the heat. The girls spent much time in the cool, green woods, and the companionship did the frail, lonely girl a world of good.

September came, and soon the nuts would be ripe, and the haws, already yellowing on the thorny bushes.

Mrs. Lagare and Madeline were to remain until November. They intended to spend Hallowe'en in the Green Cottage, and then they were to leave for the city, where the doctors hoped, by the next summer, to cure Madeline of her lameness.

Mrs. Lagare had written twice to Madam

Beauchamp, but no reply to either of her notes had been received.

Rowena walked into the Green Cottage one morning to find Madeline sleeping, having spent a bad night, and Mrs. Lagare in tears.

Mrs. Lagare had told the girl in a few simple words of the rebuffs received from Madam.

"What a hard old woman she is!" said Rowena, angrily.

"She is a mistaken old woman, my dear. She does not understand. She has suffered much, and we must not judge her."

But I am afraid Rowena did judge her very harshly, in her impetuous young heart.

The next day when she came Madeline had again spent a restless night, full of pain, and by the last of the week, in a panic of fear, the great doctor in New York was telegraphed for, and even Rowena was not allowed to see poor Madeline.

One afternoon, the third day after she had been excluded from Madeline's room, Rowena walked up the hill and knocked at Madam Beauchamp's front door. When the great brass knocker resounded she felt her heart leap with fear, and her face was very pale when she asked for Madam.

Madam came into the drawing room, leaning a little on a gold-headed cane, for she had grown feeble in these last few months.

Rowena had not decided what she would say. She had followed a blind girlish impulse, and when she stood facing Madam she was tongue-tied. And then she said what she had never intended to say.

"Oh, you cruel, cruel, old woman!" she cried. "How can you be so hard,—and your own child's daughter in so much sorrow, and Madeline may be dying!"

At the name 'Madeline,' the color left

Madam's face. But she raised herself, stiffly and proudly.

"And who are you, may I ask, who come to my house, with your impertinent interference?" For she could not see well in the darkened room, with its heavy hangings.

And then Rowena found herself. She gave Madam a chair and sat down beside her, and the old woman listened while the girl stumbled on, telling her story as best she could, with tears and entreaties, and reproaches sometimes.

Through it all Madam said never a word. But who shall say what sorrow tugged at her heartstrings, or what tears she wept, in the darkness?

At the end she laid her hand on Rowena's bright head.

"Child," she said, "I like your spirit. You are a true Beauchamp. Tell Dan to get the carriage."

And half an hour later the amazed inhabitants of Beauchampville watched the old-fashioned barouche wonderingly, as it bowled down the road, old Dan driving the bays, and Rowena sitting silent and bright-eyed beside the old lady, who was shaken out of her stony calm, with spots of warm color burning in either cheek.

Madam stayed at the Green Cottage until Madeline was out of danger. No one ever knew what passed between the two—the proud old woman and the mother. But Madam brooded over Madeline, and the eyes were soft and warm when she stroked the bright hair.

When the girl was stronger and out of all danger the Green Cottage was closed, and Madeline and her mother went to spend the last few weeks with Madam at Valambrosa.

CHAPTER XII

THE FESTIVAL OF ALL HALLOWS

THOSE were happy weeks in the great house, for Madam, a Madam the girls had never known or imagined before, made the cousins welcome, and there were beautiful mornings in the lovely garden and wonderful evenings in the wide hall about the great old-fashioned fireplace, where Madam told them stories of her girlhood, spent in the quaint city of Charleston, and of her own mother and grandmother, who had both been belles and beauties in their day. There was a wonderful garret full of queer old furniture, and in the cedar chests were gowns and bonnets half a century old.

One night they had tableaux in the drawing

room, and Madam herself superintended the building of the stage, which old Dan improvised for the occasion. All the aunts and cousins were invited, and afterwards there was a magic-lantern show.

Mrs. Lagare and Madeline were to leave for New York the first week in November, and on Hallowe'en all the cousins were invited to a party at Valambrosa. What a wonderful party it was, and what a happy time the girls had getting ready for the great event! Madam directed, old Dan and young Dan both gave their services, while Cousin Marcia spent the day stringing red and green peppers from the farm, and popcorn and pine cones for decorations, and the girls were here, there, and everywhere, helping at first one and then another of the delightful tasks. Madam sent to the city and ordered little black witches with pointed caps, on broomsticks, flying over tipsy

looking yellow moons, and Dan made numbers of Jack-o'-lanterns out of big orange-colored pumpkins. Workmen came out and spent the morning doing wonderful things to the electric lights, and at night each moon and each Jack-o'-lantern glowed softly, giving a weird effect to the gayly decorated room.

The garret chests were ransacked of their finery, and, amid much gayety, Rowena and Madeline were decked in the quaint, short-waisted gowns of half a century ago, with the wide skirts, fichus, and mutton-leg sleeves, and the tiny mob caps on their sunny heads.

A little throne was built at one end of the room, decorated with bright paper roses, which Cousin Marcia had taught Madeline's deft fingers to make, and here she and her crutch were installed, with a banner of white and silver above, with the lettering in silver: "The Queen of the Revelry."

And happy revelry it was, for Madam knew wonderful games, and before the evening was over a quaint, gaudily dressed gypsy knocked at the door and asked for admittance, and volunteered to tell the young ladies' fortunes.

Betty was to be a wonderful writer; Sallie was to marry a Prince Charming; Madeline was to get well and strong under the great New York doctors.

When the gypsy, who carried herself very much like Madam, came to Rowena, she took the girl's long, slim fingers in hers:

"You are to live in a distant city," she said, "and you will be a musician who will give much happiness to others."

And that night, when Rowena lay thinking happily of the wonderful evening, the words came back to her again and again:

"Oh, if it were only possible! If only the gypsy's prophecy might come true!"

CHAPTER XIII

LOSSES AND GAINS

MRS. LAGARE waited only long enough for Madeline to become rested from the effects of the Hallowe'en party, and then they said good-by to the Green Cottage and Valambrosa.

Madam drove Mrs. Lagare and Betty and Sallie in her old-fashioned carriage, and Madeline and Rowena drove to the station in the pony cart.

It was a sad parting between the girls, for Madeline and Rowena had become much attached, and Rowena cried a little as the train pulled out and Madeline, pale but smiling, waved them good-by.

The boy from the livery stable took the pony

cart to the village, and Rowena drove back in the carriage with the girls and Madam. Madam bade Dan drive Betty and Sallie home, but carried Rowena off to the great house with her to tea.

Afterward, as they sat in the drawing room before the cheery fire that crackled on the wide hearth, Madam suddenly said, in her abrupt way:

"Can you write, Rowena?"

Rowena looked up in surprise:

"Yes, Madam."

"I mean, can you write so one can read? Most girls write abominably."

"Father says I write a very legible hand."

"Well, let's see." And Madam handed her a portfolio.

Rowena, wondering, wrote her name, and then Madam's, and the line, "We live in deeds, not words."

Madam looked at the writing critically.

"Yes, that is a fairly good hand for a girl. How would you like to come to me three times a week, and read to me and write my letters? I shall want your whole morning, but I shall pay you the same salary Mrs. Lagare gave you."

How Rowena's heart bounded! Already there was a little sum set aside toward the music lessons she longed to take, and now this meant many comforts and maybe a little more toward the lessons.

"Oh, Madam, of course I will come!" And she kissed the old lady, timidly, and went home treading on air, in spite of her longing for Madeline.

It was ten o'clock the next morning that Rowena, practicing some new music, saw old Dan drive up to the gate in the pony cart. The girls ran out in surprise and delight at seeing

Prince again. Dan handed Rowena a note addressed to

THE GIRLS
The Cedars

When she tore it open she read:

"DEAR ROWENA AND SALLIE AND BETTINA:

"I am sending you Prince as a surprise-good-by present, a 'remember me,' as Betty would say. Please love him very much and take good care of him until next summer.

"Your loving,
"MADELINE.

"P. S. Mother thinks perhaps he had better be kept at the stable, where she has made arrangements for him, but you are to have him every day as often as you like."

How the girls hugged him, and what a babel of delight there was!

They drove to the station for father on Saturday afternoon, and it was a jubilant story they told. And father listened with his arm about Rowena, and a happy smile on his tired face.

That night, when the others went to bed, Rowena lingered as usual:

"Daddy," she said, "somehow your eyes look smiley, and the little trouble wrinkles are n't near as deep as usual."

And daddy drew her to him, as he said:

"I am happier, little daughter. Do you remember my telling you early in the summer of meeting an old university friend in Raleigh? Well, he has acquired an interest in a big publishing house in New York, and he has brought out a book I have written during the long, lonely evenings when I have been away from my girls, and the publishers think it is going to be a success. If it is, that will mean all the debts paid, and then father can give his girls some of the comforts and pleasures he has had to deny them."

"Oh, daddy! How glad I am! Not for us, for we are happy as we are. But, oh, I am so

glad the little worry wrinkles are going, and your eyes are getting glad."

And she kissed him, happily. He was such a dear, good, unselfish daddy, and Rowena loved him very dearly.

CHAPTER XIV

AN END AND A BEGINNING

THEY did not hear often from Madeline, for the doctors would not allow her to exert herself, but Madam heard frequently from Mrs. Lagare, and the reports were very encouraging. The doctors thought that Madeline might grow well and strong in time, and maybe some day walk and run about like other girls.

December was drawing to a close, and it was Christmas Eve. Rowena was putting on her coat and hat, preparatory to leaving Madam, after a rather arduous morning when Madam had been cross and absent-minded, when the old lady said abruptly:

"When Madeline is well how would you like to go to New York to study?"

Rowena was so surprised that she sank right down on the horse-hair sofa, and looked at Madam without a word.

"Why, child," cried Madam, "don't look so frightened. Why not? You have talent, that is plain to see, and I think you have a right to a chance. There are no music masters here, and I think Madeline would like to have you. There! Don't eat me up!" For Rowena, by this time recovered from her surprise, was hugging and kissing and laughing and crying over Madam, in the most ridiculous way.

And Madam laughed, and pushed her cap straight, and seemed to like it, for all her brusque words.

That night, as Rowena and Cousin Marcia and old Dilsey were decorating the drawing room with evergreens, and hanging the trimming and presents on the little holly tree that Jubal had found for them, Rowena's

face was grave, and very happy, as she said:

"Cousin Marcia, I often think how I used to grumble about things not being as I liked, and now I can't be happy and grateful enough. It has been such a beautiful, beautiful year!"

On Christmas Day a box came for the girls from New York. In it there were a box of candy and several books for Betty, some ribbons and a box of dainty handkerchiefs for Sallie, a dress for Dilsey and tobacco for Jubal, a book for father, and for Rowena there was new music, a dainty gold pin, and a letter from Mrs. Lagare:

"The doctors are very encouraging about Madeline," she wrote, "and think by the spring she may be able to walk. At any rate, my child is greatly improved.

"Madam has written me about her plans for your education, Rowena, and you are to come

to us if you like. We shall have a pretty flat, convenient to music masters, and not very far from the best musical center, and we want you very much. We shall try to make you happy and shall take good care of you, and know we shall all be proud of our musical girl some day."

And as Rowena folded up the note, after reading it to father, she said:

"I may never be a musician, father, but I shall try to be so patient and brave and good that you will all be proud of me, anyhow."

And father kissed her very tenderly as he said:

"If you are that we shall all be prouder of you than if you were the greatest musician in the world. It is the homely, everyday virtues that count for the most, after all, Rowena."

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